

THE DESOTO COUNTY NEWS

Cannot Escape

**Prisoners In Portland
Have Tried It and
Failed.**

**Adventures of a Pair Who
Broke Out of Their Place
of Confinement and Were
Captured—Other Cases.**

"Escape from Portland! You could as easily flog back the flooding tide!" The old, gray bearded ex-warder of the famous English prison shrugged his still broad shoulders contemptuously.



VINCENT, WHILE TRYING TO DESCEND A PRECIPITOUS WALL, FELL.

ly. "The man who can get clear away from Portland hasn't yet been born," he added.

And so it would seem to the most unobservant visitors. There is no point of vantage upon which a warder, with gun loaded and cocked, is not stationed; there is no single prisoner upon whom is not centered the steel hued glitter of a score of jealous, untrusting official eyes. The favored convict who is privileged to enter an officer's house to execute some necessary repairs in masonry or woodwork carries out his task with an armed warder standing at his elbow.

Should a prisoner, wearied to desperation by the unending round of unwilling service and longing to break the silence to which he is condemned, make a bid for freedom the black flag is hoisted mast high and the boom of cannon rolls down from the heights to the town below. The connections between the Verre barracks and the prison, telegraphic and telephonic, are utilized so that a cordon of soldiers is at once thrown around the island. Warders, soldiers, townfolk, are at once on the alert, and the chase, in which the wretched human quarry has no ghost of a chance, begins and is sustained until the too daring convict is again within prison walls.

"It is the wholesome dread of punishment that accounts for the few attempts that are made to escape," said the ex-warder already referred to. "No legal quibble can pull the culprit out of his trouble."

"Lighter diet is one of the penalties of his offense, and that is no mean thing in this appetite reviving locality. Then the convict must don a livery of bright canary yellow and wear ten pound irons day and night. These irons are fastened to the ankles, while chains pass up his legs and are linked to a belt around his waist."

"He may be flogged too. It is probable that he will be. Thirty-six lashes laid on by a muscular marine are no joke."

The ex-warder is proud of his prison. He exults in its absolute security. "Whatever people may say, there never has been an escape from Portland," said the old man.

"There is a rumor that a Frenchman once crept away in a thick haze, clambered down the cliffs to a waiting boat and thence sped over the channel to his native land. But there is nothing of this in the official records. Another story tells how a prisoner made a dash for liberty, broke into a chaplain's house and stole a suit of broadcloth, which he sent back six months later. Personally I doubt the truth of it."

"There was one fellow who managed to gain Dorchester road, Weymouth, seven miles away. That was in 1873. His name was Beaumont, and he was really one of the most daredevil men ever consigned to Portland."

"When he first got away he managed to conceal himself in a church. There he stole a surplice, which he somehow slipped into a respectable imitation of a smock. Creeping cautiously down the road, he came across a couple of milk cans, which he promptly commandeered. With these he proceeded slowly on his way, passing scores of people, who had not the faintest notion of his identity."

"He did not long enjoy his liberty."

when he caught a glimpse of a white smocked man running rapidly out of sight. He drew the attention of the constable who accompanied him to the circumstance, and together they gave chase. The issue was never in doubt. The tired, hungry, footsore convict was retaken and suffered severely for his temerity."

The latest recorded attempt occurred on Jan. 16 of the present year. Two men, John Wilkinson and George Vincent, burst through the ceilings of their cells, crawled along the corridor and by means of a length of rope which had been deftly smuggled gained the exercise yard. Thence they broke through four gates, all fitted with patent locks. They made an attempt to go seaward. Vincent while trying to descend a precipitous wall face fell and broke his ankle. Both were captured.

How fares the prisoner at Portland? Does the system in vogue make a better man of him? Is it reformative as well as penal? The ex-warder had responses as ready as emphatic.

"Look here," he said, "criminals don't come here to have their palates tickled with dainty viands, their bodies rested upon beds of down, their ears regaled with racy gossip. They come here for punishment."

"They are not badly treated, and I say this in spite of your opinion. Fellows sodden and debased have quitted Portland with more than some sparks of manliness in them. Besides, I have had the same men through my hands two and three times over, which doesn't speak badly for the treatment they've received here," he added, with unconscious humor.

On the other hand, it is maintained by some, contrary to the ex-warder's statement, that the convicts are insufficiently fed, oppressed by the insufferable law of perpetual silence and used as beasts of burden even on the public highways. "Don't send me back to penal servitude," was the piteous wail of a wrongdoer to the judge on whose mercy his punishment depended. "The life is one I wouldn't give to a dog."

Portland is as proud of its notorious prisoners as it is of its famous prison. From the convenient height of one of the hostleries which face the quarries men infamous in history are pointed out. When their hour of liberation comes, if it ever does come, crowds throng the little local railway station to witness their departure. And this severance is not without its sadness to the prisoner.

A BRAVE GIRL KILLED A BEAR

**She Did Not Faint on Seeing
Bruin, but Put In Practice
Skill In Marksmanship.**

N. F. Spicer, former mayor of Laramie, Wyo., was recently in Denver and to a representative of the Post told of an adventure had by Miss Maud Riggles with a bear. "Miss Riggles," said Mayor Spicer, "is but eighteen years of age, but she shot and killed a cinnamon bear, using only one bullet from a 22 caliber Marlin rifle."

"The animal was chasing the calves in a corral belonging to Miss Riggles' father when she made war upon it. She was so close to the bear, which had just thrown a calf, as to make her position very dangerous, but she did not hesitate to fire. She did not faint or even turn pale, but proceeded to



ONE SHOT WAS ALL THAT WAS NECESSARY.

summon help and skin the animal. It weighed several hundred pounds, and the fur was in excellent condition."

"Charles Murphy, who resides at Spicer, caught a huge black bear among his cattle and succeeded in roping it. The bear had killed one of the cattle and was in a herd of cows. Mr. Murphy, who had no other weapon than his lariat, cast that, twice missing the bear, but the third time fastened the loop upon one of his hind feet. The bear ran after the rope had been thrown and tried to climb through a barbed wire fence. It became entangled in the wire, and the rope was fastened to the wire. Mr. Murphy declared that the animal with its forepaws deliberately loosened the loop from its hind foot, extricated itself from the barbed wire and ran away. The cowboy says

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Hospitality.

Dumas, the elder, had a dog as hospitable as his master, and this dog once invited twelve others to Monte Cristo, Dumas' palace, named after his famous novel. Dumas' facetious in chief wished to drive off the whole pack.

"Michael," said the great romancer, "I have a social position to sustain. It entails a fixed amount of trouble and expense. You say that I have thirteen dogs and that they are eating me out of house and home. Thirteen! What an unlucky number!"

"Monsieur—if you will permit—there is but one thing left to do. I must drive them all away."

"Never, Michael!" replied Dumas. "Never! Go at once and find me a fourteenth dog."

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